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Editor: Sister Mary Marguerite, R.S.M., Mercy College, Detroit, Michigan

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Advertising inquiries should be addressed to Brother Julius Herbert, F.S.C., Christian Brothers College, St. Louis, Missouri.

THE CATHOLIC THEATRE PILGRIMAGE: A REPORT

The twenty-two members of the Catholic Theatre Pilgrimage went to Europe last summer primarily to see the Oberammergau Passion Play. After a month of touring, which included not only a full agenda of daily historical and cultural tours but also a crowded schedule of theatre attendance, the Passion Play eventually receded into the background of our thinking and the tour became an educational adventure in international theatre.

Our first play abroad was in the plush-and-gilt atmosphere of the Comedie Francaise. In Paris, as in the other cities of Europe, we noted that the theatre decor and architecture was, like that of our own country, of another generation. We were amazed at the low price of the tickets and wondered what visitors to the United States thought at having to pay nine dollars and forty cents to a Broadway musical when forty cents often sufficed for excellent accommodations in many theatres of Europe. One thing is certain: the exorbitant American prices offer no more comfort, fewer facilities, and less exciting theatre than that purchased so inexpensively abroad. In a minor key, after enduring the insipid orange drink of Broadway intermissions, it was amusing to buy Eskimo Pies from the ushers of the Comedie, and to place an order for sandwiches and tea to be served at intermission in London.

At the Comedie, we first watched a dull one-act curtain-raiser, *Il Faut Qu'une Porte Soit Overte ou Ferme* by Alfred de Musset. Static, talky, and atrociously lighted, the piece drew an occasional laugh from its audience and polite applause at its merciful end. The main fare, *Tartuffe*, was staged in a highly realistic set with a background of endless corridors which resembled the Met of pre-Bing days. Costumes were exquisite and lighting adequate, but in general, one gathered that the technical production of the Comedie was rather dated and unimaginative. The acting of the Moliere play, however, was another matter. Madame Bertha Bovy, as the mother of Orgon, started the action on a high level of vigor. Aware that the Sganarelle plays call for considerable overt farcical action, I nevertheless suspect that the French actor plays Moliere with greater inner action, vigor, and vitality matched by perfect bodily discipline than does the American actor. The parody over here so often seems to surrender to utter abandon in bodily movement while missing the inner vitality of Moliere's glowing comic spirit so evident in the Paris production of *Tartuffe*.

Our next big theatre city was Munich. We arrived there on a flood tide of enthusiasm after the beauties of Paris and Chartres, the comfort of the deluxe train ride through France and Belgium, and the enjoyable stay at Cologne, a Cathedral city of remarkable cleanliness, hospitality, and beauty which has risen Phoenix-like out of the rubble of war. Then, too, there had been the excursion along the Rhine through mountains dotted with fairy-tale towns and imposing castle ruins to the relaxed and trim beauty of the spa resort at Wiesbaden. Indeed, we arrived at Munich in a most optimistic and jovial mood, saturated with the romance and physical beauty of Germany, a country which has lived in our

imagination beneath the cloud of the bitter and terrified memories of the Third Reich.

In Munich, itself, we fell from our cloud. Interesting enough as a city with its mixture of the baroque and modern, Munich was crowded and noisy: crowded with the influx of Congress visitors and noisy, we suspect, by habit—at least, so it was downtown where we were quartered in the Platzl—a second-rate hotel which has a good staff and food, but which is atop a cabaret and opposite the largest beerhall in Munich, the Hofbrauhaus. Sleep was, at a premium with the rowdy carousing of young and old, the roar of motorcycles at all hours, the blare of bands, and the raucous shouting of beer drinkers. There was compensation, however, in the churches of the city which revealed their restoration in the extensive whitewashed walls which set off the glowing exuberance of the gold altars, angels, and gilded swirling stone and marble draperies of the baroque interiors. Although we were present for only the initial opening ceremonies of the Congress, we could sense the unifying power of the Eucharist which would soon reign at the center of this place of world pilgrimage. Of special interest to us as theatre people was the impressive array of events designed to show the overflow of Eucharistic life into the cultural life of the nation and the world. There were numerous exhibits, concerts, oratorios and plays included on the Congress program.

The first performance we saw was that of Claudel's *Joan at the Stake* with music by Arthur Honegger and German libretto by Hans Reinhart. The curtain of the Prinzregenten Theater rose on a massive tier of judges. The banked tier, lighted in a spectral greenish blue, covered the entire opening of the proscenium. After the foreboding strains of the introductory chorus, the tier parted and moved to the sides to reveal Inge Langen as Joan at the stake. While flashback events were acted either on the forestage or in brilliant pageantry behind a scrim at the rear of the stage, Miss Langen's performance was stunning in its impact from her first spoken lines until the final moments when the projected flames enveloped her. Spent and breathless at the unforgettable magnitude and beauty of the performance, we all agreed at tour's end that this performance of the Bavarian State Theatre was, perhaps, the greatest highlight of our trip.

At the Theater am Garnerplatz, the State Theatre also presented *Tobias Wunderlich*, a folk opera by the late Joseph Haas. Here we moved from the sublimity of Joan to the charming satire of pilgrimages centering around a tale of a statue of St. Barbara which comes to life when greedy townspeople attempt to sell it. The Saint deigns to live as a servant in the house of her sole defender, Tobias the Shoemaker. The chaste love of saint and shoemaker, the ridiculous follies of the townspeople—all blend in a story of high imagination that is scored to alternately beautiful and comic music. A magnificently flexible unit set on a revolving platform accomplished the rapid changes from church interior to the shoemaker's home to the market place. The only adjective to describe the set is "ingenious"; and yet it was perfectly suited to the action, neither dwarfing nor distracting from that action. All characters, except the two leads, were in charming masks; and all spirited through the zestfully stylized comedy and gay choreography. I had to pinch myself in order to remember that I was in Germany since this light, deft touch I had expected of the Gallic spirit rather than in Munich. Here was theatre at its imaginative and exhilarating best.



The opening scene of **JOAN AT THE STAKE** shows the chorus banked in tiers as Judges.

Below: Inge Langen as Joan at the stake in two of the scenes before the burning.

(Photographs courtesy of Bayerischen Staatsooper)



Jederman, (Everyman) at the Deutsches Theater was also impressive technically with its skeletal constructivist set linked by tubular Gothic arches and a rose window. Costumes and directorial business were also colorful. The acting, however, was of a heavy texture; and, while George Froelich had his moments in the title role, the humor fell with a thud and the air was generally redolent of sauerkraut. A most effective moment was the spectral appearance of Death at the banquet and the horror on Froelich's face as the arm of death struck athwart his heart.

Nestling picturesquely in the Bavarian mountains, Oberammergau is a fairyland of quaint, colorful homes decorated with the bright religious murals and nursery legends that adorn so many Bavarian homes. Catholicism is in the atmosphere and dominates the woodcarving which is the chief profession of the townspeople. All things considered, while there is little doubt that the villagers know the value of a dollar, the air of commercialism is not as obtrusive as in other places of pilgrimage. One senses that the Passion Play is the life of these people.

The Passion Play, however, is bleak. Apart from the freezing cold and the language barrier which we endured elsewhere without prejudice to our enjoyment, we were generally impatient for the play to end. Dissatisfaction did not stem from the ridiculous charges of one of our Americanslick magazines about "anti-Semitism" since both heroes and villains of the Passion are Jewish. Dissatisfaction came not from any such doctrinaire or sophisticated commitments but rather from the realization that what we were watching was neither truly religious nor truly theatrical. Although the theatrical is offensive in liturgical commemorations, a religious story which uses the form of the drama should be immersed in theatricality. Oberammergau is untheatrical—drearily authentic down to the seedy, tattered costumes, and tediously pietistic with the endless choruses and awkward tableaux from Adam and Eve on through the Old Testament prototypes and figures. As the Christus, Anton Presinger was singularly uninspiring, especially in the pink tights worn from the scourging on. As in most Passion Plays, Judas (Hans Schweiger), and Peter (Hans Maier) stole the show and relieved the play of its routine dullness for a few brief moments.

At Erl in the Austrian Tyrol, we saw another Passion Play which was much more impressive artistically with its unique unit setting—a many-leveled log structure with background projections on the cyclorama. Apart from the setting, this play offered little enjoyment and often irked and amused by reason of the crassly amateur acting. Kaspar Pfisterer as the Christus gives a dismal performance.

The Verdi *Othello* at Venice was a complete sell-out; and we had to content ourselves with wandering about the set in the courtyard of the Doge's Palace, poking into the rigging for the fireworks, and picturing the probable entrances on the magnificent marble stairway. The beauty of the Piazza San Marco and its gossamer Cathedral, the symphony orchestras, the sparkling burgundy at ginger ale rates, the vision from the speeding taxi launches of the illuminated churches along the canal, the Assumption of Titian in the Church of the Frari, the operatic arias of the gondola parade—all served to make us forgetful of theatre for a few glorious days.

The performance of Verdi's *Aida* at the Baths of Caracalla faded into insignificance amid the splendors of the Eternal City. The performance, nevertheless, was impressive. Settings were stunning and the spectacle breathtaking even though one had the uncomfortable feeling that it would at any moment dwarf *Ben-Hur*, not to speak of the singers. Maria Coleva in the title role and Giuseppe Vertecchi as Radames managed to rise above the swirl of armies and chariots, and not only sang magnificently but also acted with verve and credibility. It was a thoroughly professional—though somewhat elephantine—performance with Napoleone Annovazzi conducting.

Perhaps, one of the most pleasant surprises of the pilgrimage was the extension to Einsiedeln in central Switzerland. We were fortunate to be at this shrine of the Black Madonna on the eve and feast of the Assumption. The shrine itself is at one end of the massive church in charge of the Benedictines. By all standards, not only is the church one of the most ornate and beautiful in the baroque style with its paintings by the Assam brothers, but it is also an inspiring house of prayer—ceaseless prayer from 4:30 a.m. when the monks begin Matins throughout the masses and the many services at the shrine with daylong crowds of pilgrims, a majority of whom seemed to be men, singing and praying before the famous statue of Our Lady.

In the evening, the huge esplanade of the church is used as a setting for Calderon's *Great Theatre of the World*. The work of the Spanish priest-playwright has recently been superbly and freely translated in this country by Clarus Graves, O.S.B. and Cuthbert Soukup, O.S.B. of St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota. Unfortunately, the script has not been as widely produced as *Everyman*, even though it is more typically medieval and at one and the same time more spiritually majestic and humanly touching than *Everyman*.

Dr. Oscar Eberle directed the Corpus Christi festival play with a masterful use of pageantry and group movement over the cobblestones of the square and with full utilization of the imposing church facade, steps and balustrades. Although the characters are symbolic—King, Richman, Wisdom, Beauty, the Beggar, and so forth—the performances seemed to take on a dimension of reality beyond allegory and were played incisively with clarity of diction and grace of bodily movement. In vastness of spectacle which did not submerge the drama in the colorful costumes, and in the orchestration of chimes, bells, organ, wood and brass instruments, the performance was an acclamation of faith that was also theatrically satisfying in the tradition of the best religious drama.

We did want to see a London musical comedy and selected one that had been "recommended" only to find it embarrassingly saucy. *When in Rome* had a splendid leading man and a competent leading lady, and nothing else fit to grace a professional stage. The less said about this trite and tired show the better.

At the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, we were delighted with the Royal Ballet. Although the first of the three offerings, *Pineapple Poll*, was an insipid frolic of Gilbert and Sullivan bankrupt of their special genius of the lyric, the final two offerings were superb. Donald Britton was a fascinating lead in the macabre humor of *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. He al-

so scored as the lead with Anne Heaton as the bride in another macabre dance of tragic overtones, *Blood Wedding*, after the plot of Lorca's play.

The highlight of the London theatre for us was Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*. A thoroughly Catholic viewpoint dominates the play which, unlike so many Thomas More plays, does not have the air of inevitability overshadowing it. The character is explored in all the rich dimensions of his Christian humanism—his wit, wisdom, familial love, faithful friendship, political acumen and unflagging fidelity to the true Church. Paul Scofield, regarded as the heir to Gielgud's throne, is an actor with a singular voice—lacking the rich resonance of his great colleagues in the British theatre,—but his genius is his ability to delve within and project a character without external pyrotechnics. Scofield does not act; he *is* More. Leo McKern, as the Commoner, is the narrator-actor of this non-realistic stage piece and, whether commenting or participating, he is joyfully roguish. Through the Commoner, the playwright is able to telescope time and events for greater dramatic impact. Motley's ingenious unit setting enhances the effectiveness of this most imaginative religious drama of our time.

Our excursion into the Shakespeare country was one of the most relaxing and educational extensions of the tour. Although the preservations are charming, the town has a resort atmosphere and the cheaply commercial souvenirs preclude the quiet dignity typical of the Canadian Stratford which actually has many more interesting exhibits and buys in Shakespeariana. Our lodgings, however, were in an exquisite setting at the end of Clopton Bridge. Besides boasting a record of ownership dating from 1066, Aylsford Manor is also reputedly the site of the first performance of *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The Festival Theatre is set in an attractive park on the Avon where people loiter throughout the day and sometimes remain in their sleeping bags in order to be first for tickets in the morning. Generally, however, neither the setting nor the interior can match the Canadian Stratford. The Avon Theatre is a standard theatre with a relatively small proscenium arch and the usual run on red plush upholstery and gilt trim.

Under the new director, twenty-nine year-old Peter Hall, there is an attempt to catch the non-illusionistic quality of Shakespeare by breaking the proscenium and by developing an ensemble of non-star, young actors who will grow together in style over the years.

Although we did not see his Shylock, we did catch the twenty-eight year-old sensation of the season, Peter O'Toole, as Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida*, the bitter comedy of a season representing the various facets of Shakespearean comedy. Staged against Leslie Hurry's stylized painted backdrop, the action took place, for the most part, in a circular sand box; and the action—despite Hurry's sand box—was fluid and exciting with much colorful pageantry lacing the talkative piece. Jointly directed by Peter Hall and John Barton the sardonic irony of the comedy was highlighted in the agile performances of Denham Elliot as Troilus, Dorothy Tutin as Cressida, Elizabeth Sellars as Helen and Max Adrian in a masterfully simpering and venal portrayal of Pandarus.

One can only expect that having extended the apron by fourteen feet and having installed a raked revolving stage, Mr. Hall will in future years lead the English Stratford toward ever more exciting frontiers of interpretation. Artistically, the present session has been a landmark; and we were fortunate to see a sample of its offerings even though it meant waiting in line for hours to obtain standing room at twenty cents. In order to see the matinee we had to wave goodby to our tourist bus and taxi back to London. The total cost, however, still did not equal the cost of a ticket to the far less satisfying and less enriching atmosphere of a Broadway musical.

All things considered, we saw but a segment of the theatre of Europe. But what we did see was generally exciting, alive with experimentation and promise, and an organic part of the life of the peoples of the continent. Whether American theatre will ever return to better theatre at lower prices is problematical; but America can provide that type of theatre as Europe does on a community level. Our hope is that the Catholic Theatre Pilgrimage not only widened our understanding of the art of the theatre, but also inspired us toward standing more forthrightly for the integrity of theatre as an art in America.

Gabriel Stapleton, S.D.S., President
National Catholic Theatre Conference

CORIOLANUS AND THE ASCENT OF F-6: SIMILARITIES IN THEME AND SUPPORTING DETAIL

By WILLIAM C. CAVANAUGH

From what we know of W. H. Auden's politics in the nineteen thirties, we might expect him, in a play with such subject matter as *The Ascent of F-6*, to wave a red banner. In this play there are aristocrats, common people, political rivalries and questions of patriotism. But the main purpose of the play is not to be a vehicle for leftist ideas; for here Auden and his collaborator, Christopher Isherwood, present a drama of an individual facing what was for him an impossible, and hence, a tragic dilemma. The authors stress the importance of the individual and the indifference, if not the unimportance, of the state. The motives and consequences of the hero, Michael Ransom, are studied under an eye more Freudian than Marxian, and perhaps, as will be shown later, even more Shakespearean than either Freudian or Marxian.

Francis Scarfe says of Auden that he has a preoccupation with the Oedipus complex for dramatic material. Scarfe points out that in two plays—*The Ascent of F-6* and *Paid on Both Sides*—Auden makes use of the mother fixation. In *Paid on Both Sides*, Seth's mother urges him to kill his guest to revenge his brother. When Seth finally commits the murder, it is on the flimsiest of motives, according to Scarfe, who calls the relationship between Seth and his mother almost the same as that between Ransom and his mother in *The Ascent of F-6*. Seth believes that by committing the murder he will wipe out all the cowardice and weakness of his childhood, as does Ransom. To Scarfe, who says of the Auden-Isherwood play, "The whole business of the Oedipus complexes swamps the political considerations under," the play suffers from tortured psychological probings.¹ But it should seem that mother-son relationships as dramatic material are on quite respectable ground, having found their way into the works of such successful moderns as Tennessee Williams (*Suddenly Last Summer*) and Robert Sherwood (*The Silver Cord*). And if this is not respectable enough, there is always *Coriolanus* by Shakespeare.

The similarities between *The Ascent of F-6* and *Coriolanus* are, in fact, striking. Central to both plays is the mother-son theme with the difficulties of the respective heroes in managing their wills according to principle rather than according to attachment. The power theme is also common, as are numerous likenesses in the supporting detail of both plays. To my knowledge, Auden makes no mention of a special debt to Shakespeare for themes from *Coriolanus* that appear in *The Ascent of F-6*. But it is not altogether unlikely that the debt

¹ Francis Scarfe, *W. H. Auden* (Monaco, 1949), pp. 22-25.

William C. Cavanaugh is a teaching assistant in the English Department at the University of Wisconsin where he will receive his Doctoral Degree within the year.

should exist: Auden's frequent Shakespearean allusions are well known. In 1952, years after the first production of *The Ascent*, Auden discussed *Coriolanus* with Howard Griffin, mentioning the corruption that stems from power. He spoke in the same discussion of the fickleness of the public and the debilitating influence of a mother using her power over an adult son.²

To say, however, that there are similarities between the two plays is not to say that Auden did a modern adaptation of *Coriolanus*. The Oedipus complex is and has been in the public domain, and I feel sure that if the Oedipus theme occurred to Shakespeare, it did not distract him from the business of making Plutarch's story of Coriolanus into a drama. Likewise, if the Coriolanus theme occurred to Auden and Isherwood, it did not keep them from the business of developing and analyzing the character of a modern man—not a watered-down version of an ancient Roman hero.

First of all, there is the matter of the exercise of the will to please the mother rather than to follow a well-defined moral principle. The will to do as his mother wishes supersedes Coriolanus' loyalty to either the Volscians or the undeserving Romans. His love for his mother is finally the weakness that kills him, and in the end he does not understand why (V,vi,103-110). So with Ransom who is drawn to the Demon he knows not why; he does not climb F-6 out of pity for the public who want to make a father of him. It is not pride or the will to power that drives him on to destroy himself, but he has a compulsion to seek the Demon. And in the final scene, when he finally sees that the Demon is his mother, he becomes as a child and goes and puts his head in her lap.³ What Bradley says of almost all Shakespearean heroes is true of Auden's Ransom. In the words of Bradley: "We observe a marked one-sidedness, a predisposition in some particular direction; a total incapacity, in certain circumstances, of resisting the force which draws in this direction. . . . In the circumstances where we see the hero placed, his tragic trait . . . is fatal to him."⁴

Ransom does not understand the force which drives him to the summit of F-6. He is a great man, for only he among British men is capable of reaching the goal. Once set in motion at the request of his mother to ascend the peak, he cannot be distracted. He tries to analyze the situation, but fails and sets aside the advice of the Abbot and the Doctor. Ransom's unusual ability as a leader puts him in a position to save the honor and power of Britain, just as Coriolanus' leadership puts him at the head of the Volscian Army with the power to save Rome. Coriolanus and Ransom cast aside good sense and good advice for the sake of their mothers.

The question of "a marked one-sidedness" on the part of Ransom can be discussed as a problem of the will, and this discussion can be related to the case of Coriolanus. In his study of Auden, Richard Hoggart says:

² Howard Griffin, "Conversations on Cornelia Street, IV (A Dialogue with W. H. Auden)," *Accent*, XII (Winter: 1952), 58-60.

³ W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, *Two Great Plays by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood* (New York: 1937), p. 182.

⁴ A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: 1950), pp. 20-21.

Blake and Auden agree about the nature of the will which, according to Blake, was 'the faculty by which we try to change ourselves according to a pattern prescribed by the reason, by moral codes, and by religious organizations.' The attempt must always end in disaster for the reason has no faculty for understanding the whole of the personality.⁵

In *The Ascen. of F-6*, Ransom, who is originally not disposed to do the bidding of the government, the press and the public, changes. He changes because his reason tells him that he will make his mother love him more by doing as she wishes. He consents to make himself a "party to the general fiasco"; he so berates in his opening soliloquy.⁶ But not even great men understand "the whole of the personality." Neither Coriolanus nor Ransom can act objectively, because the possibilities for acting are limited by the personality.

The conflict in Ransom's personality which makes him want to remain aloof from the general fiasco and yet please his mother presents an insoluble dilemma. The force of that part of his personality involving mother love prevails, and through the use of his will which is severely limited in its possible choices, Ransom brings about disaster. As Hoggart points out, "Ransom can detect the infection of the will in others; he recognizes it in his brother's lust for power, . . ." but he does not understand it in himself.⁷ When the Abbot warns Ransom, he says that the Demon works through the will to destroy men, and that for every man the Demon varies his visitation and ministry to suit the unique nature (personality) of each individual. Moreover, the Abbot cautions that by opposing the will of the Demon men bind themselves more tightly to it.⁸

The warning of the Abbot can be applied to Coriolanus as well as to Ransom, but the riddle is not obvious: the Demon is a paradox; for Ransom and Coriolanus, it is the mother attachment that finally brings about disaster; the more the heroes operate independently to bring credit to themselves, the stronger grow the mother ties. The mothers want their sons to be great men and obedient children at the same time.

The problems of both men are rooted in childhood, and by instinct and practice, both men refer to childhood for escape. What Hoggart says as he considers Freudian themes in Auden especially applies here:

The defense measures by which we conceal or compensate for the prevailing sense of insufficiency take strange forms, but all are shaped finally by the desire to escape. . . . There are numerous . . . private types of evasion, e.g. the desire to return to the irresponsibilities of childhood, to that childhood which yet dogs us with its vestigial tyrannies, and from whose terror we rarely escape.⁹

⁵ Richard Hoggart, *Auden* (New Haven: 1951), p. 126.

⁶ Auden and Isherwood, p. 119.

⁷ Hoggart, p. 80.

⁸ Auden and Isherwood, pp. 153-154.

⁹ Hoggart, p. 122.

With Ransom and with Coriolanus the ties of childhood are unusually strong, for both men learn their nobility through the influence of their mothers. Volumnia knows that she is the source of her son's strength, and she takes credit for it (I, iii, 6-17):

When yet he was but tender-bodied and the only son of my womb, when youth with comeliness plucked all gaze his way, when for a day of king's entreaties, a mother should not sell an hour from her beholdings, I, considering how honor would become such a person, that it was no better than picture-like to hang upon the wall, if renown made it not stir, was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him; from whence he returned, his brow bound with oak. I tell thee daughter, I sprang not more in joy on first hearing he was a man-child than now at first seeing he had proved himself a man.

Like Volumnia, Mrs. Ransom tells how she sought to shape the destiny of her son. In her speech is that same note of pride and self-pity found in the speech of the ancient Roman matron. Addressing Michael, she says:

But you, you were to be the truly strong
Who must be kept from all that could infect
Or weaken; it was for you I steeled my love
Deliberately and hid it. Do you think it was easy
To shut you out? I who yearned to make
My heart the coziest nook in all the world
And warm you there forever, so to leave you
Stark in the indifferent blizzard and the lightning?
How many nights have I not bit my pillow
As the temptation fought to pick you out of bed
And cover you with kisses? But I won.
You were to be unlike your father and your brother,
You were to have the power to stand alone;
And to withhold from loving must be all my love.¹⁰

And while Volumnia thrills to see her son's "brow bound with oak," Mrs. Ransom, again calling attention to her capacity for enduring pain, says:

May not a mother come at once to bring
Her only gift, her love? When the news came,
I was in bed, for lately
I've not been very well. But what's a headache
When I can stand beside my son and see him
In the hour of his triumph?¹¹

But do not the mothers of the heroes, in wishing to make their sons strong, make them weak? Volumnia and Mrs. Ransom could foster the qualities of no-

¹⁰ Auden and Isherwood, p. 138.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

bility in their sons, but even such deliberate women as these could not guide the formation of their sons' motives. Coriolanus went out in search of honor for Rome because Volumnia wished it, and Michael Ransom acquired the strength necessary to stand alone because the person he wished most to stand beside, his mother, seemed to rebuke him.

Mrs. Ransom thought she could control the results of a pretended coldness toward Michael, whom she thought would grow truly strong in standing alone. And indeed, believing in his mother's feigned rejection, Michael grew in strength. But the strength depended on the negative bond of rejection that his youth and hunger for love would not let him understand.

When called upon by his mother to use the strength grown out of her strategy, he leaps at the chance to please her—to undermine the first place in her affection which he had always believed to be occupied by his brother. Whether the mother uses her power over Michael simply to be further indulgent with her elder son, Ransom does not ask. He acts. And when he acts, he becomes involved in the "frantic fiasco" of society, thus violating the animating principle of his power. In effect, the mother who begot his strength destroys him.

How like the tragedy of Michael is Coriolanus'. Volumnia, too, had designed her son for greatness. She is proud of the sacrifice she believes she made—as if her son's life were less precious to him than to her. Recall how certain Mrs. Ransom is that she made the sacrifice when she withheld her love from Michael. Along with Volumnia she believes that the greatness she has created is its own reward. But the women are not content to leave their creations alone; their acts in setting Michael and Coriolanus adrift are imperfect because not final. And the greatness of their sons is imperfect, having its ultimate foundation in the mothers' ambition. Without interference from their mothers, both Ransom and Coriolanus would have continued to act according to the higher principles of conduct in which they believed. Coriolanus would never have stooped to flatter those he detested, nor would he have spared the lives of the citizens who had persecuted him; Ransom would not have involved himself in international rivalry for the sake of wealth or power. Again and again both men are tested, but neither succumbs until faced with the pleadings of his mother. The heroes wish to fulfill a destiny set in motion when they were children; but the forces which had set these destinies in motion, the mothers, use their power to confute the original direction. In so doing Volumnia and Mrs. Ransom present their sons with a dilemma, an impossible problem for the will—hence the disaster.

If the theme of the will enters both plays at one specific point, the theme of power pervades both plays. *Coriolanus* and *The Ascent of F-6* say thematically that the will to power taints the blood of any leader. Auden gives the theme expression on the lips of the Abbot who cautions Ransom of the pitfalls of the human will. In Shakespeare's play the theme is implicit in the revulsion Coriolanus feels at the prospect of having to debase himself in order to assume the consulship. The abbot, seeing that Ransom is not blind to his own power to lead, reminds him that the world needs men with the power to set a limit to the corrupt hearts of the masses. Then he warns:

... but woe to the governors, for, by the very operation of their duty, however excellent, they themselves are destroyed. For you can only rule men by appealing to their fear and their lust; government requires the exercise of the human will: and the human will is from the Demon.¹²

When the Abbot leaves, Ransom utters a prayer to the Creator that he be saved from the destructive element of his will. But the problem of the mountain continues to face him. He had rejected, in turn, the temptations inherent in Stag-mantle's cash, Isabel's feminine worship, and James's prestige. Not understanding why he stands poised to climb F-6 when the Abbot confronts him, Ransom devises a mechanism which he deludes himself into believing will save himself from his will—he appeals to his friends who have their own various motives for wanting to make the climb. He rationalizes, trying to believe that his leadership is a submission, saying: "I obey you. The summit will be reached, the Ostians defeated, the Empire saved."¹³

We know, however, that Ransom's rationalization is futile, for his will is not to political power; he wishes to be in the power of his mother and to enjoy her love. And he goes on. Ransom could understand the unavoidable corruption of power in others, but his inward look is blinded. In the opening lines of the play Ransom had contemplated Dante's use of the words "virtue" and "knowledge" equating them with "power." Ransom saw an hypocrisy in Dante, who wanted power to revenge his years of involuntary privation, who wished: "... with a stroke of the pen to make a neighbor's vineyard a lake of fire and to create in his private desert the austere music of the angels or the extravagance of a fair."¹⁴

Like Coriolanus, and unlike Ulysses, Ransom is no "seedy adventurer" with an expensive education;¹⁵ nor is he an opportunistic politician. What Hardin Craig says of Coriolanus might easily be applied to Ransom, in whom we have "... a man whose whole being, consistent with itself, refuses to compromise with what he believes to be base. ... Such a man has a right to a hearing and is indeed of a far more heroic mold than any political compromiser whosoever."¹⁶

In *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare shows us that the hero's uncomprehending breach of political principle for the sake of his mother caused his tragedy. While the vaulting idealism and courage of Coriolanus lifted him to a spiritual level high above those with whom he had to deal (family, friends, citizens), his enslavement to Volumnia killed him.

Two of the principal scenes in *Coriolanus* parallel the scenes in *The Ascent of F-6* in which Ransom rejects the prestige of political power but sets aside other political principles for the sake of his mother. The act of showing his wounds to the Romans is repugnant to Coriolanus. When it is clear that he would rather relinquish his claim to the consulship than beg the favor of the plebeians Volumnia comes on the scene. Coriolanus addresses her (III, ii, 14-18):

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁶ Hardin Craig, *An Interpretation of Shakespeare* (New York: 1948), p. 285.

Why do you wish me milder? Would you have me
False to my nature? Rather say I play
The man I am.

He wonders at his mother's request, but having rejected the entreaties of Menenius and Cominius, Coriolanus temporarily relents for his mother's sake. But his submission perplexes him.

Like the Abbot, Coriolanus sees a spiritual taint in the will to power. As he thinks to follow his mother's wishes, he says (III, ii, 110-123):

Well, I must do't:
Away, my disposition, and possess me
Some harlot's spirit! my throat of war be turned,
Which quired with my drum, into a pipe
Small as an eunuch, or the virgin voice
That babies lulls asleep! the smiles of knaves
Tent in my cheeks, and schoolboy's tears take up
The glasses of my sight! a beggar's tongue
Makes motion through my lips, and my arm'd knees,
Who bowed out in my stirrup, bend like his
That hath received an alms! I will not do't,
Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth
And by my body's action teach my mind
A most inherent baseness.

Since the political advantage is lost by the time he decides to bow to the plebeians, his first surrender is not final. Like Ransom with his temporary reprieve on the way to the peak of F-6, Coriolanus has a second chance when the Romans banish him. Poor timing or chance helps save the integrity of Coriolanus in Act III, but when in Act V, he stands outside the gates of Rome ready to have his revenge, there is no salvation. Volumnia comes to him to plead for Rome. Whereas Ransom is not aware that the Demon on F-6 is his mother, Coriolanus does realize the danger involved in his mother's pleas. Ransom had found it necessary to use the device of his friends' commands in his drive to obey his mother; but Coriolanus needs no illusions. After again rejecting Menenius and Cominius, he is helpless before Volumnia. She is right when she says (V, iii, 158-159): "There's no man in the world more bound to's mother." As Coriolanus makes his decision he recognizes his probable end, saying (V, iii, 182-189):

O mother, mother!
What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,
The gods look down, and this unnatural scene
They laugh at. O mother, mother! O!
You have won a happy victory to Rome:
But, for your son,—believe it, O believe it,
Most dangerously you have him prevail'd,
If not most mortal to him. But, let it come.

The will to power would have made lesser heroes of Ransom and Coriolanus,

who could only with revulsion bring themselves to appeal to the base natures of the public. But they were powerless before their mothers. Both men had received their original honor by individual effort—Coriolanus as a great soldier, Ransom as a great mountain climber—and neither respects or wants power bestowed by a public he does not respect. Where diluted public virtue, where the glossed-over civic prostitute conniving for public approval, or where the public man bartering ideals for power succeeded, Coriolanus and Ransom failed. Had they been men of less moral stature, they would have succeeded in any vulgar bid for power. As it happened, only their mothers could deflect their otherwise unflinching principle.

In the above discussion of the power theme in *Coriolanus* and *The Ascent of F-6*, the public has often been mentioned. Both plays use the public: in *Coriolanus* the citizens play an active part in the drama, and in *The Ascent of F-6*, Mr. and Mrs. A., typical British citizens, function as a chorus. Though they are used in different ways, the similarities between the Romans and Britishers are strong. Both are restless—the Romans with rebellion, and the Britons with boredom. The plebeians complain that they are underprivileged, as the first citizen in *Coriolanus* says (I, i, 14-21): "We are accounted poor citizens, the patricians good . . . our sufferance is a gain to them." On hearing of Ransom's intended climb, Mrs. A. pcevishly complains of her status:

It's all very well for him, he can travel.

And later, in answer to her husband's promise of better days, she says,

O, what's the use of your pretending?
As if life had a chance of mending!
There will be nothing to remember
But the fortnight in August or early September.¹⁷

The heroes of the plays share a distaste for the masses that is similar in kind if not in degree. Ransom says, "Under I cannot tell how many of these green slate roofs, the stupid peasants are making their stupid children."¹⁸ Coriolanus never speaks of the plebians without contempt. He explodes with invective when they banish him (III, iii, 120-123):

You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate
As reek o' the rotten fens whose love I prize
As the dead carcasses of unburied men
That do corrupt the air, I banish you . . .

With *Coriolanus* and with *Ransom*, the exceptional few fight the battles for the weakling citizens. The strong lead; the weak are uninteresting and unappealing. The ingratitude, the remoteness, and the mercurial favors of the public are of no concern to Coriolanus: he loathes them, so their ingratitude makes no difference. They thrill to see his dozens of wounds, but they can misunder-

¹⁷ Auden and Isherwood, pp. 128-129.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

stand and reject him as easily as worship him and are swayed easily by the tribunes and a few mob leaders. Though Ransom sees the limitations of the public, he does not share the bitterness of Coriolanus. The dreary Britons of the play have their adventure vicariously through Ransom, as the Romans had theirs through Corioianus, but the Britons never banish Ransom. The pity that he can feel is never paralleled in Coriolanus. In this respect the heroes differ drastically, for Coriolanus has a conflict with the Romans; the citizens in Auden's play function indirectly.

Somewhere in Ransom's heart there is love of humanity. The Abbot sees it in the crystal and thinks that he understands that Ransom's temptation is "a wish to conquer and then to save mankind."¹⁹ But lurking in the background of both Shakespeare's and Auden's plays is the question of whether the public is worthy of such champions as these plays have. When Lamp is killed, Mr. A. is at least sensitive enough to ask:

Do you think it would comfort Lamp to know
The British Public mourns him so?
I tell you, he'd give his rarest flower
Merely to breathe for one whole hour!
What is this expedition? He has died
To satisfy our smug suburban pride . . .²⁰

The plebeians never make such an observation.

Another minor connection that remains to be made is that between the arch-rivals of Coriolanus and Ransom—Aufidius and Sir James. In *The Ascent of F-6*, James and Michael begin in totally different camps. Strangely, they become engaged in a common cause, though each has separate motives. In the finale of the play, when Michael is dead, he is praised in a eulogy given by his old rival. So too with Coriolanus who after many wars with them, arrives in the Volscian camp with Aufidius as his comrade. When Coriolanus lies dead, Aufidius praises him in the final lines of the play. This similarity, like all others which have been pointed out, is not perfect; Coriolanus and Aufidius are soldiers, not sibling rivals, and where James realizes his goal through Michael, Aufidius is only partially successful in his use of Coriolanus.

Clearly, there is no scene by scene parallel between *Coriolanus* and *The Ascent of F-6*, but the many similarities of theme and detail that do exist should make the question of whether Auden and Isherwood were directly influenced by *Coriolanus* a serious one. In an early review of the play²¹ C. Day Lewis remarked that Auden seemed to be putting all his eggs into Freud's basket; a variation of the remark that seems not unreasonable would be: did Auden borrow Shakespeare's basket to put Freud's eggs in? With the economic pressures of the thirties as they were, it is not strange that *Coriolanus*, with its unsympathetic treatment of the plebeians, would be overlooked as thematic influence on Auden. But Auden, with his interest in psychology, is not a likely one to overlook the fascination of the Coriolanus theme.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

²¹ C. Day Lewis, "Paging Mankind," *Poetry*, XLIX (January, 1937), 128.

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

By GERMAIN MARC'HADOUR

"An unwieldy saint . . . A nuisance of a saint . . . Not the stuff of which martyrs are made . . . Unmilitant saint . . . Also one of the most unrelenting burners of heretics at Smithfield . . . Unflagging caution . . . Uses all the resources of an unsleeping, and at times, even devious intellect to avoid, till faced with the last compulsion, telling the truth . . . It was that pride in his own conscience that finally destroyed him. . . . Lurking humour ready to leap to the surface on the slightest excuse . . . A temperamental squabble between a nice lawyer who dislikes divorce and a lusty monarch who wants an heir . . ."

This is a sampling of the judgments passed on Thomas More during the first fortnight of July 1960, by theatre critics in various London dailies and weeklies. The papers were reviewing Robert Bolt's play, *A Man For All Seasons*, which premiere was performed at the Globe in the same West End of London on July 1, four hundred and twenty-five years to the day after its hero had been sentenced to a traitor's death.

The title of Bolt's play is from a phrase applied to More when he was forty-two years old and the most popular citizen in London: "*Vir omnium horarum*." It was taken from *Vulgaria*, a book of prose-composition for young Tudor Latinists written by Schoolmaster Robert Whittinton and printed in 1520 by Wynkyn. The phrase meant that More's wisdom knew how to be "in season grave, in season gay, as time requireth." But the playwright has given the phrase a different meaning, which he himself explains in the program notes:

The action of this play ends in 1535 but the play was written in 1960, and if in production one date must obscure the other, it is 1960 which I would wish clearly to occupy the stage. The life of a man like Thomas More proffers a number of caps which, in this century or any other century, we may try on for size.

Omnium horarum vir has become *vir omnium saeculorum*; the friend whose wisdom was helpful in every need is now the quiet hero whose leadership endures throughout the ages. To this *man for all ages*, our century goes with the hope that his vigorous and precise legal brain, his unbending soul and his gentle humour will provide the spirit in which our problems should be faced and brought to an honorable solution. He championed the liberty of the individual against the encroachments of the State; he minded the cost, yet he did not stick at the cost; he bartered a while, and seemed to waver, but he was never prepared to forego what to him was man's crowning glory and birthright. Today, millions of men are confronted with the same menace: how can we help being devoured

The abbe Marc'hadour, a Breton priest, "charge de cours" in medieval English at the Catholic University of Angers, France, is spending the year at Yale University editing the Supplication of Souls for the Yale edition of St. Thomas More's Complete Works.

by the Moloch? At what cost and by what means are we to defend our small islands of freedom against the inexorable, tidal wave of governmental omni-competence?

Most critics, as might be expected, paid as much attention to the 1960 More as to the victim of Henry VIII. Some searched their own minds, and came to the conclusion that "More's destruction is . . . an anachronism in a world where cowardice can always be intellectually justified. . . . We will not risk death for a subordinate clause or defy the rack for an oath." Others smugly waived off the dilemma, finding applications for it on other than English shores: "We are meant to draw an analogy between More and those witnesses who appear before the un-American Activities Committee and take the Fifth Amendment." However, before reviewing the reviewers, I must say a word about the play itself and about its author.

Born in 1924, Robert Bolt is still a young man. He taught for several years, before becoming a professional playwright. Perhaps this accounts for the intellectual approach in *A Man for All Seasons*: one critic described it as "graduate school lecture-drama." And yet Bolt is no newcomer to the stage: his other plays especially *Flowering Cherry*, were well received in England; although none of them approached the tremendous success of his play about More. This play is, in fact, his second on the subject: a radio-play by him, with the same title, was presented February 28, 1959, by the British Broadcasting Corporation and performed by the Company of the Manchester Library Theatre.

In tackling such a complex and many-sided character as More, the playwright reassures us by his lasting interest in the man, and even his long acquaintance with him: he avoids the worst danger, that of rashness. All good accounts of More have taken many years to write. Even Erasmus, after twenty years of intimate association with More, confessed to Hutten, to whom he sent on July 23, 1519, his famous letter on "his dearest friend," that it was only a tentative and imperfect picture; and begged Hutten's pardon for not doing full justice to his inimitable model.¹ Nearer us, R. W. Chambers worked for thirty-three years on his *Thomas More*, which has remained a standard biography ever since its publication in 1935; yet even he leaves out some important aspects, so that in a recent book he is accused of giving us "a radically false portrait."² Chambers was an Anglican, but that hardly affected his treatment of More. Bolt is not a Catholic either; nor even, he says, "a Christian in any decent sense of the word." On the whole, however, his interpretation of More has had a good Catholic press. He seems to have drawn upon the best sources available: Roper, Chambers, Reynolds, and *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, that masterpiece of editing by Miss E. F. Rogers, the pioneer of American scholarship in this field.³

Bolt, we have seen, has given a twist to the title-phrase: has he also tampered with the personality of More? His technique of "superimposing an historical

¹ P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen, and H. W. Garrod, *Desiderius Erasmus*, (12 vols.: Oxford: 1906-58), IV, 999.

² Cf. H. A. Mason, *Humanism and Poetry in the early Tudor period* (London: Routledge, 1959), p. 37.

³ Published in 1947 by Princeton University Press which deserves great credit for the fine printing of the letters.

parallel on a contemporary dilemma" amounts almost to *carte blanche* in remodeling his hero to serve his end. Yet he claims that the More on whom he pegs the problems of today is essentially the same person as the wise and witty, learned and affable Londoner on whom Whittinton pegged the Latin and English names for so many virtues and accomplishments. And, indeed, it would be difficult to prove the contrary.

One might regret that the drama is, perhaps, too much of a duel between a soulless administration, which the Machiavellian Thomas Cromwell embodies, and its innocent victim. As More comes nearer and nearer to being crushed by the wheels of the Juggernaut and struggles to get out of its way: as Cromwell makes it increasingly clear that its effective and convenient machinery will not be stopped for one man, we are not made sufficiently aware that there is a deeper conflict going on in the martyr's mind. Yet evidence is not lacking of his agonies "not small and not few," of the sleepless nights when he had no remedy for his fears but to "resort prostrate" to the consideration of his Saviour's death-agonies in the garden. More's passion seems to have culminated early in 1534, before he was summoned to Lambeth to take the oath. On April 13, he could boast that "the field was won," and that he had "given the devil a foul fall." But the battle went on during the fifteen months of his imprisonment. His exhausted body was spared the rack and the rope, but his heart and soul received the full treatment reserved for traitors: he was drawn, quartered, and disemboweled.

Tragedy reaches its climax—and martyrdom its perfection—in the soul of a man so "shrinking from pain," so affectionate and companionable, so opposed to singularity, so eager to please everybody, that only bare conviction and sheer obedience could drive him to apparent eccentricity and utter isolation, with all England and his own family against him, and all his friends in trouble on his account. Those who witnessed it in 1535 "could not refrain from weeping," although More showed them a cheerful countenance, and said nothing of his "heavy pensiveness." Roper, who wrote this of Sir Thomas Pope, also depicts the sturdy Constable of the Tower, Sir William Kingston, with "tears running down his cheeks." In the play, Bolt's hero wins our sympathy by his compelling charm, his gentle humanity, for he is filled with the milk of human kindness. He tickles and catches our brains and forces our conviction, perhaps, by the subtlety of his wit and the ripe wisdom of his pleas. We admire him and love him, and yet we are not really gripped and stirred and shaken by the man or his tragedy.

This lack of emotion in the drama may be partly attributable to the way Paul Scofield plays the role of More, sometimes changing his inflections of loving-kindness to a sardonic, almost flippant tone. But the final explanation lies, I think, in the fact that More, as written and acted, is too much the brother of Socrates, Antigone, or Galileo—not enough the brother of Joan of Arc or Thomas à Becket. One critic calls the play "an essay in hagiography"; whereas, it is anything but that: More's sanctity has not been emphasized; rather, it has been toned down. In stating this, and even regretting it, I mean to imply no adverse comment on the playwright. In *Saint Joan*, Bernard Shaw was taken to task for not keeping the pledge contained in the qualifying word "saint" of the title; and for this, it was not an adequate defense to cite "the conditions imposed upon history by stage representation." But Robert Bolt dubs his hero a man, not a saint, for all ages. He deserves credit for what he has done, not blame for what he never attempted to

dramatist will do for him what Peguy, Claudel and others have done for St. Joan; and show that his sanctity not only was born of conflict, but also enabled him to rise above all his conflicts, because obedience to the will of God was the leitmotif in the intricate symphony of his life and death.

I should like, however, to cite a number of instances where Bolt's hero is far from being "Saint" Thomas—indeed, where he almost forgets he is a Catholic. As when he flings a sarcastic "Dominus vobiscum" at the head of the sanctimonious Chapuys: the real More, the devout "parish clerk" of Chelsea, would not have cast a liturgical pearl before swine. As when, again, he describes as a "theory" the doctrine for which he is dying; whereas, the Pope's supremacy was an unyielding historic fact, only recently obscured by degenerate fifteenth-century scholastic "theoreticians," across whose Gallican or conciliary theories More had laboriously reached to the constant Catholic tradition. As, also, when we see him standing with his wife and daughter and expediting their night-prayers in a loud, mechanical and perfunctory way, we feel that it was not from this sort of prayer that he drew his superhuman wisdom and energy. On the other hand, none of his contemporaries would have thought of hinting that More wished to "govern England by prayer": he had given abundant proof that he was a practical, shrewd, business-like and efficient executive. One sentence from his prayers in prison sums up his program: "The things, good Lord, that I pray for, give me thy grace to labour for."

Rather than discuss the artistic merits of the play and its performance—the use of Brechtian devices, such as the lowering of emblematic panels from the flies to indicate changes of scene; the role of "The Common Man" who serves as Chorus and frames the action with a modern outlook.—I should like to review the reviewers and examine some of the strange opinions which, in their response to the play, they voiced in their otherwise competent columns.

"We will not risk death for a subordinate clause . . ." So writes Alan Brian in the *Spectator*. This view is partly borne out by Bolt's play; and that is why the Common Man, for all his love of More, pronounces him guilty, not of treason, but of pigheadedness. True, More objected to only one point in the preamble of the Succession Act; but he knew enough theology to realize that the clause, however subordinate it might be grammatically, was doctrinally capital and crucial. By implying the repudiation of the Pope's supremacy, it changed the Act of Succession into an Act of Secession. More had spent ten years searching Holy Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church; and much to his distress, he had come to the conclusion that the Papacy was an essential hinge of Christianity, something a Christian could not reject without risking eternal death.

"A temperamental squabble between a nice lawyer who dislikes divorce, and a lusty monarch who wants an heir . . ." This is Kenneth Tynan's statement in the *Observer*. Here every word is wide of the mark. Temperamentally, Henry VIII and his Chancellor had enough in common to provide the foundation for a real, warm-hearted friendship. Both of them wanted an heir for England and a quiet succession to the Crown. Both of them disliked divorce—or, rather, disapproved of it—and knew that it was never granted by any law either of the Kingdom or of Christendon. More's allies in his defense of Queen Catherine were not lawyers. His motives were not legal. When, in *Utopia*, he had the chance to devise the



Thomas More (Paul Scofield) and his daughter Margaret (Pat Keen).



More presents Richard Rich (John Bown) with a valuable silver goblet.

Richard Leech as Henry VIII.



More's family visit him in prison.

laws for his own ideal republic, he granted the Utopians divorce, complete with remarriage of the partners, as an extreme remedy: just as God had tolerated it in the Old Testament.⁴ But Christ ruled it out altogether, not as an abominable monstrosity, but as an imperfect solution, never to be applied under the law of perfection, which is the law of Christianity.⁵ England's "lusty monarch" had been very emphatic in praising the indissolubility of marriage against Luther in 1521. "The King's great matter" was never a divorce case: ostensibly, and perhaps not altogether insincerely, Henry petitioned the judges, not to annul his first marriage, but to pronounce that he was still a bachelor, bound to dismiss his sister-in-law, with whom, he said, he had been living in incest for twenty years.

"More used all the resources of an unsleeping, and, at times, even devious intellect . . ." And: "He did his uttermost to save his head . . ." No one stated more clearly than More himself his reluctance to die a traitor's death, with its horror and infamy. When the pack of wolves who were hounding him saw him both careful to avoid any step that might speed up his condemnation, and yet unwilling to shrink back one inch from it, they were "at their wittes end." They had some excuse for being puzzled: we have none. For he read his own riddle for them, and Bolt echoes the answer very clearly in the play: No man may run to his death, least of all to a martyr's death, for that would be suicide and presumption. Man's life is in the hands of God; and so, More believed, we should abide God's time and trust Him to help us die well, if we must face death rather than disobey His will.

A pathetic moment in Bolt's play points out something which even now, is indeed baffling. More urges his wife and children to seek safety by fleeing to the Continent. This is, so far as I know, an addition to our records of More's life; yet how true it sounds! That was the obvious solution: every Englishman in danger sailed over to France or The Netherlands: it was little more than swimming distance from Calais to Boulogne. More himself had made the voyage often, and had even done it once to save his life. Why not do it again? Not only was it an honorable and peaceful way out of trouble, it was also recommended as the wisest course by Christ Himself. More, in his *Treatise on the Passion*,⁶ explicitly refers to Our Lord's giving His disciples "his own commandment to fly from persecution when they conveniently can, lest in temerarious and foolhardy offering themselves thereto, their bold pride may turn into cowardice, and take a foul shameful fall." When More was on the Continent negotiating the Peace of Cambrai, in August 1529, the clouds were already piling up: he could have easily arranged to settle anywhere in Western Europe with his whole family. And he could still have done so between his resignation and his imprisonment. No doubt, he had good reasons for not even contemplating it, some of them perhaps so noble that we could hardly guess at them. He was the King's knight and servant. He was the standard-bearer of the old religion. He was an old sailor who had stood near the helm: he would not slink out of the boat in the days of storm.

⁴ Deut. 24:1.

⁵ Matt. 5:31-32.

⁶ *The Works of Sir Thomas More*. Printed at London, at the costes of John Cawod, John Waley, and Richard Tottel. Anno 1557 (fol. 1458 pp.), p. 1300.

"Also one of the most unrelenting burners of heretics at Smithfield . . ." This howler appeared, not in one of the cheap London dailies, but in *Punch*, under the name of Eric Keown. It is all the less excusable, since the point comes up in the play, where the charge is being forged under our very eyes, and we can breathe the atmosphere in which such slanderous tales will thrive. More began to be attacked even before he handed back the Great Seal: the Lutherans and the Boleyn party were both bent on discrediting and destroying him. In his words, they wished first to "deflower" him, so that later they could easily "devour" him.

More determined to save his good name; not so much, it seems, because of his family as because he was the champion of the Catholic faith and had already published several books against the heretics. And so he wrote his epitaph in Latin, and had it carved in stone and set up in his parish church for all to read. In June, 1533, he sent a copy of it to Erasmus.⁷ A year earlier, in a letter to Erasmus under the date June 14, 1532, he notified his friend of his resignation, adding a reference to the English heretics, to the effect that they were being properly handled "et Praesulum cura, et Principis auctoritate": repressing heresy was the King's and the bishops' business.⁸

Then More proceeded to write his *Apology* in English, wherein he refuted in detail the charges of cruelty circulated against him. At the same time Erasmus, perhaps on More's suggestion, wrote a long letter to John Faber, bishop of Viennne, France. It was ready before the end of 1532.⁹ "The rumor has spread," says Erasmus, "that More was sacked by his King, and that his successor freed lots of prisoners More had put in the stocks for their heresies." Erasmus could testify—and we know from various reliable sources—that More had begged the King to relieve him of the burden; that Norfolk, the Senior duke, had publicly and emphatically thanked More, on behalf of Henry VIII, for the wise and loyal discharge of his office. As for his conduct toward heretics, Erasmus says, it is true that he abhors the new doctrines, because they are false, and because there is, about them and in the way they are preached, an element of sedition. More had been personally partial to the Lutherans, Erasmus continues; but, in dealing with them, he was bound to abide by the laws of England which, on that point, were the laws of Christendom. One more proof of More's well-tested humanity and gentleness, of his restraint and wisdom, is the fact that not one of the novators was put to death while More was Lord Chancellor.

R. W. Chambers found a few cases of burning in More's thirty months of office, but he proves clearly that the Chancellor was not responsible. All trials were conducted by the bishops; and the mildest of all, Cuthbert Tunstal, was More's personal friend. But the tales spread, and found their way, through Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, into Bishop Burnet's third volume of the *History of the Reformation*. In the first half of the nineteenth century, however, Mackintosh in England, Nisard in France, and Walter in America devoted much space in their biographies of More to establish that all charges of cruelty on his part were

⁷ Allen, X, 2831.

⁸ Ibid., p. 2659.

⁹ Ibid., p. 2750.

mere legends. Keown must have had his information from some outdated cyclopedia, because historians have unanimously endorsed the verdict, "not guilty."

Many other errors could be pointed out; but there would be no end to the job, and no time to enjoy St. Thomas More himself. He is steadily coming into his own. His works are being edited, translated, analyzed, and commented upon. An increasing number of essays and books are sure to be written on them and on him. Other plays will be composed; to be followed, undoubtedly, by films. As More becomes better known, the apparent contradictions in his life will be reconciled in harmony. One key will be found to open all avenues leading to his heart of hearts: his sanctity. He was something of a sage and something of a hero; and yet he was called upon to die the martyr's death for which the Church canonized him.

THE GREAT WORLD THEATRE ON A MODERN STAGE

By JOSEFA QUEROL-KROENBERG

The Great World Theatre, an adaptation in English of one of the master-works of the Spanish Golden Age, Calderon's *El Gran Teatro del Mundo*, was presented on the evening of May 18, 1960, by the students of Our Lady of Cincinnati College, Edgecliff. Enhanced by its splendid out-of-door setting—a high campus lawn overlooking the deep gorge of the Ohio—and by the most varied illumination modern technical ingenuity could devise, the production was spectacular, exotically beautiful, and deeply moving to its audience. Such outdoor performances of classic drama have been successfully sponsored in the public interest by government ministries charged with cultural affairs and by universities in Spain, Switzerland, Germany, and the United Kingdom, as well as in the United States, so that the production at Edgecliff was a continuation of an already long-established tradition.

Calderon and Lope da Vega are the colossi of Spanish drama, and critics are divided as to which should be ranked the first in excellence. As Lope da Vega is the genius of the realistic tradition, so Calderon's drama is generally regarded as being essentially heroic. However, in spite of the predominance in his work of the themes of love and honor, Calderon represents in his *Autos Sacramentales*, of which more than seventy have been positively identified, the culmination of the tradition of dramatic allegory in Spanish literature.

More universal in appeal, because of its allegorical nature, than the nationalistic plays of the heroic vein, the *Auto Sacramental* has its roots in the Middle Ages. Spanish drama, like that of all Western Europe, began in the Church, where the surviving remains of Graeco-Roman culture took refuge after the barbarian invasions had done their work of destroying the cultural continuum deriving from the ancient world. The earliest Spanish play is a thirteenth-century mystery called *Auto de los Reyes Magos* (*The Act of the Magi Kings*), which was presented during the Christmas cycle. At this early time, there was, in addition to the mysteries, another type of play—the morality, and it is from this latter kind that the *Auto Sacramental* derives. An *Auto Sacramental* is a dramatic piece in one act, referring to the Eucharist, and expounding the whole of Christian theological teaching concerning the creation of man.

In 1263, when the Feast of Corpus Christi was established in the Catholic world by Pope Urban IV, a great impetus was given, especially in Spain, to the devotion to the Eucharist; and in 1314, the presentation of these dramas, particularly associated with the veneration of the Blessed Sacrament, became an important part of the celebration of the feast. At first, the plays were presented in the churches; their themes were simple and reverent; they were informed with

Dr. Josefa Querol-Kroenberg is an assistant professor of Spanish at Our Lady of Cincinnati College, Cincinnati, Ohio.

characteristic, popular medieval naivete and candor. The form of the *Auto Sacramental* remained static until the seventeenth century when Calderon brought to bear on its tradition his complex Renaissance artistry and transcended its pious simplicity by his profound theological learning. Because he was already a master of his art, he could and did raise the *Auto Sacramental* to a plane of abstract realities where religious insight and philosophical speculation could purify and refine it.

Don Pedro Calderon de la Barca, born in Madrid, lived between 1600 and 1681, during the reigns of the three last Austrian rulers of Spain—Philip III, Philip IV, and Charles II. It was a time of apparent decadence in Spanish civilization and of waning power, but the court maintained in even greater, almost Byzantine intensity, the pomp and splendor of its grandest days. Calderon, who, after receiving his earliest education from the Jesuits, had studied at the universities of Alcala and Salamanca, nevertheless always retained his connection with the royal palace, where most of his works were first performed. His life kept in balanced tension its two orientations—the courtly and the religious, and his aristocratic spirit, fastidiously disdaining the temptations of the world and the flesh, led him eventually to the priestly life. Even after his ordination, his ties with the court were unsevered, and he continued to write at royal commission the *Autos Sacramentales* which were presented at the Corpus Christi festivals. Produced in the public square of Madrid on carts especially designed for the purpose, these plays were viewed by a heterogeneous audience ranging from royalty to vagabonds—equals in faith before the Mystery of the Eucharist.

Calderon was a man of deep religious convictions and of a profoundly theological temper of mind. Although his parents had dedicated him in childhood to an ecclesiastical career, he did not become a priest until he was fifty-one years old. Only then was he finally convinced of the validity of his vocation, because he had believed that his parents' desire that he enter the Church arose from material ambition rather than devotion. His first dramatic work was written when he was twenty-three, but he did not begin to write the *Autos Sacramentales* until ten years later when he had acquired great experience in this medium and was acknowledged to be the foremost dramatist of Spain. To this traditional allegorical genre, Calderon gave a new form. He modified its primitive state by doubling the length of the play, adding music as an integral part of the production, and greatly increasing the complexity of its structure. He added more roles, episodes, and scenes, and gave to this type of drama the character of a spectacular pageant. His serenity, his sublimity of style, his masterful intelligence placed the *Auto Sacramental* in the literary moment in which he himself lived, and compelled it to express the mind of his own age.

The great Spanish genre disappeared on June 11, 1765, when Charles III, influenced by the rationalism of the French Encyclopaedists, prohibited by royal decree its presentation.

Among the one hundred twenty comedies, twenty interludes and seventy *autos* that Calderon wrote, *El Gran Teatro del Mundo* is still regarded as a masterpiece having a universal, timeless appeal. The year of its composition is not positively known. Students of the period give varying dates, but documentary

proof exists that it was played as early as 1649.¹ Its history outside of Spain shows the recurring interest it has held for men of other languages and times. It was first translated into English in 1856 by Richard Cherix Trench (London), and within the past twenty-five years, a German adaptation was made by Hugo von Hoffmannsthal. In Spain, it was printed for the first time, since Calderon's own day, in 1881, the bicentenary of his death. Since then it has been presented several times in Madrid and in Granada. Before 1942, it was produced at Cambridge University and more recently was staged in Switzerland. The last production at Our Lady of Cincinnati College was based on the English adaptation by the American Benedictines, Clarus S. Graves, O.S.B. and Cuthbert G. Soukup, O.S.B., published by the Liturgical Press in 1958. Their translation, although free, retains the essentials of the original and preserves its spirit of grandeur in spite of necessary concessions to the demands of modern production.

El Gran Teatro del Mundo contains a philosophical allegory that is timeless because it is addressed to all Christians of all times. Its universal theme is independent of fashions in art or in ideas. Calderon is able to integrate the theater of the *Autos Sacramentales* with that of his own epoch, because his thoughts are subtle probings of the interior life of man. The play is an architectonic whole, built up progressively to its climax; the action is simple without divagations and the chief element of complexity lies in the schematic treatment of the motivations underlying the most intimate human problems.

The theme is not original; the leveling office of death is a commonplace among classical and modern authors as well as in the medieval literature of the *Dance Macabre*. But Calderon enriched it by his infusing into this play those concepts drawn from Thomistic and Augustinian theology in which his studies at the universities had steeped him. The notion of the brevity and ephemeral character of life is a constant one in Calderon's writing, notably in *La Vida es Sueno* and in *El Gran Mercado del Mundo*. It is this attitude toward the human condition which drew Calderon to the priesthood, and it is in *El Gran Teatro del Mundo* that he most fully develops his theological view of the history of mankind, thereby opening new avenues in universal understanding.

The Calderonian text of the play exhibits all the formal characteristics of the *Auto Sacramental*: it has but one act; it is a dramatic allegory; it is dedicated to the praise of the Eucharist, which, out of the reverence of a later age, it treats only in the final apotheosis² in which the Host appears on a great altar before which everyone adores—players and spectators alike—singing in congregation St. Thomas' great hymn, the *Tantum Ergo*.

The plot of *El Gran Teatro del Mundo* outlines the essential history of the human race, as it is interpreted by Christianity, but its intellectual premises are particularly those of the Counter-Reformation. It was the great Catholic controversialists of that movement by whom Calderon was inspired. He responded to his era's artistic promptings, as well. *El Gran Teatro* is a Baroque drama, full

¹ Angel Vallbriena, in *Calderon de la Barca: Autos Sacramentales*, gives 1633, and in *Historia de la Literatura Espanola*, gives 1645.

² Omitted in the English adaptation.

of the chiaroscuro of that style: antithesis and metaphor mingle in a dynamism typically and violently Baroque.

El Gran Teatro del Mundo has three significant moments: the first is theological, the creation of man; the second is social, the comedy of life; the third is also theological, the Final Judgment and the culmination of the Redemption. After God has created man, the world and the natural law are offered to everyone; but each acts according to his own will.

Since you, O Law, Commandments Ten,
Have prompted actors, good and bad,
And helped with grace, who helped would be . . .³

The freedom of the will was one of the most vexed questions of the Counter-Reformation, and Calderon, one of the most ardent defenders of Catholic orthodoxy in the dispute. The comedy of life is short; death comes to make equal all its players, and God at the last judges His creatures.

The value of this work besides its poetic and dramatic excellence lies in its religious intensity and its brilliant articulation of abstruse theological and philosophical arguments. Calderon's way of truth lies through his conceptual method of dramaturgy.

In their recent presentation of *The Great World Theatre*, the students of Our Lady of Cincinnati College have borne witness to the enduring relevance of Calderon's genius. The ancient riddle of the individual soul's relationship to the grace of God is as timely on a modern campus as at the court of Philip III.

³ Clarus S. Graves, O.S.B. and Cuthbert Soukup, O.S.B., *The Great Theatre of the World* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1958), p. 27. Based on a theme of Pedro Calderon's *El Gran Teatro del Mundo*.

WHAT RELIGIOUS DRAMA OWES TO E. MARTIN BROWNE

By EUPHEMIA VAN RENSSELAER WYATT

Of all the arts, the theatre suffers most from generalities. No great painter is ever remotely connected in anyone's mind with a commercial designer; nor is a great composer associated with Tin Pan Alley. Yet, as any building in which a curtain rises is called a "theatre," everything that takes place on the stage—be it burlesque, variety shows, or T. S. Eliot—is listed in newspapers under the heading, "Amusements." On the other hand, it was the opportunity to combine the high and the lowly, the spiritual with the material, which gave impetus to the religious plays of the Middle Ages, when tremendous theological truths were imparted to the people in a combination of exalted drama and topical comedy. The theatre then spoke directly to the crowds thronging its wagon-stages.

That the stage could, and should, come closer to life and to heaven was the conviction of a young Oxonian who was graduated from Christ Church in the nineteen twenties. E. Martin Browne, the son of Col. Percival John Browne, of Zeals, Wiltshire, had concentrated on theology and history at Oxford, with the possibility of taking orders. But a stay in a settlement house in the industrial North of England had turned his thoughts to the great role open to the theatre in education and religion; and he decided to dedicate his life to the best in drama. What his one-man effort has accomplished seems very much worth telling. But it must be made clear, first of all, that the accomplishment is really that of one man plus one woman; because Mr. and Mrs. E. Martin Browne work as a unit.

It began one summer when Martin, just out of Oxford, was spending his vacation in Sussex, rehearsing an unofficial company of the Oxford University Dramatic Society (O.U.D.S.) in *Hamlet*, with Robert Speaight. A very young actress from Stratford had been invited to give a reading in the town that same week; and, when she and Martin met, it marked his first encounter with the professional theatre. Sincerely impressed by Miss Henzie Raeburn and the aura of footlights, he ventured to discuss with her the staging of Hamlet's death scene. The stars above them played their part, for when the Ophelia fell ill, there was Miss Raeburn on hand, with time to spare. True, she had never before played Ophelia; but, never having been a laggard, she sat down and learned her lines overnight. If Ophelia lost her prince, Miss Henzie Raeburn captivated her director. They were married, and returned to Sussex the next summer to play Shakespeare together.

Martin Browne made his first stage appearance in May 1927, in *David*, by D. H. Lawrence. That autumn the Brownes sailed for the United States, where Martin joined the faculty of the Drama Department of Carnegie Tech in Pittsburgh. Incidentally, while there Martin advised against failing a certain student

Euphemia Van Rensselaer Wyatt, for many years Drama Critic for the Catholic World, has been a contributing editor to Drama Critique.

whose aptitude with stage-lighting effects seemed close to genius. Abe Feder, the internationally known lighting expert, who has lit the United Nations Building and Central Park, as well as *My Fair Lady*, has fully vindicated Martin Browne's youthful good judgment. During his stay in Pittsburgh, Martin had begun to produce religious plays in neighboring parishes; and so thoroughly had he identified himself with religious drama, that on his return to England he was appointed the first director of religious drama in the Diocese of Chichester, by its far-sighted bishop, George Bell, who worked in many ways to bring church and art together again. It was Martin who devised the pageant for the Forty-five Churches Fund of the Diocese of London. Convinced, however, that the script called for a poet, he persuaded T. S. Eliot to write his first play, *The Rock*. It was presented at Sadler's Wells in May 1934, under Browne's direction. In his prefatory note for the published play, Eliot says:

I cannot consider myself the author of the 'play' but only of the words which are printed there. The scenario, incorporating some historical scenes suggested by the Reverend R. Webb-Odell, is by Mr. E. Martin Browne under whose direction I wrote the choruses and dialogue and submissive to whose expert criticism I rewrote most of them. Of only one scene am I literally the author; for this scene, and for the sentiments expressed in the choruses, I must assume the responsibility.

The theme of the pageant was the conflict between the Church and the World, symbolized in the building of a church—a church built “ ‘arf on the subscriptions of people who can't afford it and ‘arf on ‘ope,” according to the bricklayers, who have to struggle against lack of funds, labor agitators, and poor foundations, but who are encouraged in their efforts by visitors from the past: St. Mellitus, first Bishop of London; Rahere, Henry I's jester, who founded St. Bartholomew's Hospital; Bishop Blomfield, who built two hundred churches; Dick Whittington, who rebuilt St. Michael's. This was T. S. Eliot's practical introduction to playwriting. Auden, Spender, and Isherwood had already exchanged the classic iambic line for rhythms more consonant with modern tempos; it was for Eliot to find for himself a verse form in which he could express himself to contemporary audiences.

The opportunity for this arose the next year, 1935, when it was proposed by the Bishop of Chichester, formerly Dean of Canterbury and founder of The Friends of Canterbury Cathedral, to have a play about Thomas a Becket performed in the Chapter House. Mr. Eliot was again asked to write the play, for which Mrs. Browne suggested the famous title, *Murder in the Cathedral*. Its acclaim was instantaneous. Mr. Ashley Dukes brought it to London, where it played for the next three years, with Robert Speaight as St. Thomas and Martin Browne as director and as the Fourth Tempter. Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Dukes, the Federal Theatre Project in the United States was permitted to present *Murder in the Cathedral* for two weeks without royalties in New York. Edward Goodman and Halsted Welles staged it on a large scale, with music by Lehman Engel and a cast of seventy. To the surprise of everyone, it was played to Standing Room Only from the start. Continuous cables to London obtained an extension of four weeks, as Mr. Dukes had no idea that the Federal Theatre Project kept

its actors on the payroll, regardless of productions, and he dreaded turning so many people out of work. Unfortunately, when Gilbert Miller and Ashley Dukes brought over the English company of sixteen in February 1938, the tour was mismanaged, with the result that the British generosity toward the American production was never rewarded. With Robert Helpmann directing, *Murder in the Cathedral* was revived at the Old Vic in 1953, and its legacy is the very fine recording of the play with Robert Donat as Becket. In 1955, there was a never-to-be-forgotten production of *Murder in the Cathedral* in the twelfth-century parish church of Ludlow, Shropshire; at which time Mr. Eliot wrote:

I am happy to think that so long after having served its original purpose at Canterbury, it would have its part in the effort to raise funds for the restoration of one of the great historic churches of England.

In 1945-1946, the play was presented in French at the Vieux-Colombier in Paris; in 1947, *Mord im Dom* opened in Cologne, Goettingen, and Munich. In the United States, there is probably never a year when it is not produced by some theatre group in community, college, high school, or seminary. It is without doubt, the great poetic play of our century. Ever since *The Rock*, Mr. Eliot has insisted that no one but E. Martin Browne direct his plays: *The Family Reunion*, *The Cocktail Party*, *The Confidential Clerk*, *The Elder Statesman*.

After producing *The Family Reunion* in the spring of 1939, Martin undertook the staging of two plays written for the occasion by another poet, Christopher Fry, and presented at Tewkesbury Abbey Festival. Again, the scenarios were by Browne. In good weather, the plays were presented outside the Abbey Church where, in the close, a small tower had been erected as a pedestal for the statue of Our Lady, to be represented by Henzie Browne. On rainy days, Mrs. Browne had to climb a long ladder before the performance and perch herself on the ledge inside the great west window.

"Dear me, the Canon must be getting very 'high,'" remarked a parishioner one afternoon to her companion. "Just look at that painted statue of the Virgin he has placed in our Abbey." But one of the Browne's two young sons, standing by, explained, "Please, that's not a statue. That's our Mummy!" The Brownes, by then, were the happy parents of two boys.

After the Tewkesbury Festival, in spite of the cold war in progress that summer, Martin and Henzie with their boys had looked forward to a family holiday in Ireland. Deciding to risk it in August, they set out for County Cavan to visit Martin's aunt, Lady Nugent. As everyone in Europe remembers, it was one of the loveliest of summers. But hardly had the Brownes reached County Cavan when the sky of peace began to darken. Even while they were making hay in the lush Irish meadows, three million children were being evacuated from London; Poland was invaded. As the Brownes came out of church on Sunday, they heard that England was at war.

It was a breathless trip back on the night boat. To complicate matters, Martin developed jaundice. The Brownes returned to an England which was al-

ready in a state of siege. Everyone had a gas mask; blackouts were mandatory; all highway signs were being removed. Mrs. Browne drove her family to the boys' school where the headmaster, an old friend, helped to put Martin to bed. A week's quiet gave the Brownes time to consider what their most valuable contribution to the war effort might be. All their experience lay in the theatre, so it occurred to them that this might be the time when the theatre could be of real help to evacuated and war-threatened audiences. Could strolling players with the dramatizing of a message of faith and hope mingle with the people and encourage a beleaguered countryside?

If the answer were, "Yes," how might the enterprise be started? A part of that answer seemed to be implicit in a legacy of fifty pounds just left to Martin. James Bridie's *Tobias and the Angel* was chosen for the first offering. The Archbishop gave his blessing; volunteers were approached; *The Friends of Canterbury Cathedral* lent costumes and organized a tour through Kent, exposing themselves to the air raids. Thus, the Pilgrim Players was born. With their boys safe in school, their flat in London dismantled, the Brownes donated their car to The Pilgrim Players as did one of the members of the group. They started out with a company of seven: four men and three girls including the Brownes. Their example inspired the organization of a second company, The Oxford Players, which set out after the Pilgrims.

As their only capital had been Martin Browne's fifty-pound legacy, it was not in their power to offer a free performance of James Bridie's play; however, a guarantee of only thirty shillings (six dollars) was required of each community. The actors' weekly salary was also thirty shillings out of which twenty-two shillings was taken for board and lodging. When lodging or board was offered free of charge, the whole company benefited. It was naturally impossible for the actors to save any pennies out of their weekly pittance, so a common fund was created later on to replenish the wardrobes which had seen such hard service; a new coat for one of the players thus became a company event of some importance.

One of the Pilgrims' rules was never to refuse any invitation. They played everywhere—churches, townhalls, schools, parish halls, and even prisons. Blackouts and the absence of sign posts made it imperative for them to travel over a road by daylight rather than to attempt it at night. Gas was doled out very grudgingly by the authorities and often the lack of it entailed a long walk from their lodgings to the place of their performance, and long walks were rough on rationed shoe leather!

One of the few properties the Pilgrims had asked for in the beginning was a small dog for Tobias—the only pet dog mentioned in the Old Testament—but the dog was eliminated after the night that they were harrassed by the barks of a Great Dane ambitious for a theatrical career.

For their first Christmas, Martin devised *The Merry Play of Christmas*, excerpts from the York, Wakefield, and Coventry Mysteries. This was played in many village churches in Kent and in the Chapel of Our Lady of Undercroft located in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral where once the Black Prince had prayed before sailing off to the French wars. During Lent, *The Way of the Cross*,

from Ghcon's *Mystery of the Finding of the Cross* was staged by the Brownes with a narrator and with two men and two women who were alternately bystanders and participants in the Passion, their movements forming a stylized pattern. A stage has always seemed to me an incongruous place for the portrayal of Christ's Passion—Oberammergau included—but Ghcon gives his stage a fourth and spiritual dimension. Circumscribed within a smallish square, the four figures in their sculptured poses merely lend animation and devotion to a meditation on the Cross. If it can be called a play, it is the most liturgical possible.

In May, Boulogne fell. The school which housed the Browne boys and the Brownes' furniture was evacuated to Cornwall. The news from across the channel became more and more ominous. In July, the Brownes decided that they must accept the invitation from friends in America to send over their two sons. This left the parents with no home at all. They had two suitcases each while the trunk which alternately held their winter or summer clothing was stored for them by the Bishop of Derby. The Pilgrim Players had now increased to nine. The new members—brothers from the Abbey Theatre in Dublin—were the mainstay of the company: one was stage manager which meant he loaded all the luggage; the other was responsible for transportation and routing. This was the summer of Dunkirk. The roads in the southern counties were full of pitifully inadequate road blocks of bath-houses, fences, etc. guarded by farm laborers or clerks without uniforms. At the English village of Romney which is very close to Boulogne, the battalion commander said to The Pilgrim Players, "This is the greatest help you can give us; you must play all over England." In Plymouth, just after an air raid, they performed for children who had spent seven hours in a bomb shelter. They played in camps which gave to many soldiers, their first glimpse of the theatre. For six memorable weeks, as the guests of the hospitable Elmhursts (Dorothy Whitney of New York), they rehearsed *Murder in the Cathedral* in the great hall of Dartington, built by Richard II.

In the following weeks, the company's *Murder in the Cathedral* played in the neighboring countryside. The Elmhursts had provided a much-needed rest, so at the start they played ten or eleven times a week until they found that one day of rest a week was essential.

From Dartington, they drove north. In Sheffield, some young people formed a company of their own; in Durham, the miners proved themselves the warmest of audiences. Invitations from R.A.F. camps urged their appearance. In March 1941, at Lord Keynes' suggestion, the Arts Theatre in Cambridge was made available to the Pilgrims for a week so that they might charge admission and earn some working capital. Meanwhile CEMA had begun to give them thirty pounds a month.

Then came a visit to London during the Blitz. In an underground shelter of Lloyds in Leadenhall Street, *Murder in the Cathedral* was played between rows of three-tiered bunks. In Bethnal Green, the Pilgrims played in the only building left standing within a mile. No audiences could have been more sympathetic, but when they returned to London after the Blitz, they found that with the relaxing of the strain which had welded the people together, the younger generation were getting out of hand and presented a problem not only to the actors but to society.

A tour of Scotland came in 1942. Much to their amazement, they were invited to play *The Way of the Cross* by the French Catholic, Gheon, in St. Giles Cathedral of the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh. From Glasgow, came Mr. James Bridie, author of *Tobias and the Angel* to discuss a new play with the Brownes. The Pilgrim Players went up the east coast and down the west coast of Scotland. During the tour the Brownes took a side trip to Orkney where they gave a special program to twenty different units. Later the whole company played *Tobias* in the stokers' mess of a destroyer; this entailed making entrances down a ladder.

In 1943, after three and a half years touring with suitcases, the Pilgrims found themselves back in Kent and a mutilated Canterbury. Their last performance was in March 1943, in London where they were invited by B.B.C. to present Bridie's *The Dragon and the Dove* for a week at the Arts Theatre Club with Sir Lewis Casson in the lead. Shortly after, came the joyful day when the Brownes were able to recall their two boys from America and once more have a home of their own. It was from this base that the Pilgrim Players operated until 1945. They proved that the theatre had its own place among the people in war time. They had brought to many, not only a relaxation from a cruel strain, but more enduring comfort in a renewal of faith.

From 1945 to 1948, Martin Browne was associated with the Mercury Theatre in London, directing plays by Eliot, Fry, Yeats, Bridie, and Ronald Duncan. He was also director of the *British Drama League* and the *Religious Drama Society of Great Britain*. He directed T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* for the Edinburgh Festival of 1949. When none of the English managers would offer to Mr. Sherek, the producer, the opportunity to do a London production, Mr. Gilbert Miller of New York invited Martin Browne to direct a company with Alec Guinness, Robert Flemyng, Cathleen Nesbit and Irene Worth. *The Cocktail Party* was received with splendid enthusiasm in New York in 1950 and was later welcomed in London. *The Confidential Clerk*, also directed by Mr. Browne, was seen in New York in 1954 with Ina Claire and Claude Rains, but was not so successful.

Meanwhile in England, in 1951, the Brownes had staged at York, a revival of the ancient York Cycle of Mystery Plays. In the Middle Ages, the different craft guilds of York had each produced one scene of the Cycle, transporting the scene on a wheeled float to different quarters of the city. Opening at dawn on the Feast of Corpus Christi in June, the forty-eight plays of the Cycle showed the history of mankind: the Creation and Fall, the Redemption by Christ, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Last Judgment. The Brownes staged a compressed version of the Cycle in the ruins of St. Mary's Abbey in the center of York. They were successful in persuading the whole community to participate in the project. How beautifully they were able to reproduce the atmosphere of faith which had inspired the creators of the Cycle was shown in New York in 1956 when Mr. and Mrs. Browne presented seven scenes from the York Cycle as a Nativity Play in the chapel of the Union Theological Seminary of New York. The costumes and music were of the fourteenth century. The selected scenes included the Annunciation and the Nativity which had formerly been entrusted to the Tile Thatchers Guild with the Adoration of the Magi which had been the province of the Goldsmiths. In pre-Reformation days, the plays with their simple humanity based

on solid theology, had made the people at home in the Old and New Testaments. Now they spoke straight to the heart of the twentieth-century audience. "They are pure and humbling, for they mean what they say," wrote Mr. Atkinson in the *New York Times*.

Lately, Mr. Browne has edited for Meridian Books, *Religious Drama II* with twenty-one mediaeval plays and an historical introduction. Since 1956, he has been giving courses on the production and creation of religious plays at the Union Theological Seminary of New York. There seemed a mystical rightness in the visit that the Brownes paid to St. Mary's College at Notre Dame, Indiana, in 1958, at the invitation of its president, Sister Mary Madeleva, a devoted student of mediaeval drama. Sister Madeleva had a great idea for which she sought the most expert collaboration available: as a result Martin undertook to adapt from the Lincoln (once called Coventry) Play Cycle, *The Mystery of Mary*. The script was ready by January 1959, and St. Mary's began the preliminary casting while working on the design and music. Rehearsals began in February under the direction of E. Martin Browne and Henzie Raeburn with the first performance on March 23. H. Berthold Dietz directed the fourteenth to sixteenth-century music, sung by two choirs accompanied by period instruments and an organ. The costumes designed from the Giotto frescoes of Our Lady's Life were executed by two of St. Mary's students, Suzanne Stemnock and Susan Nelis. It was a production that will live long in memory. The simple straightforward but liturgical devotion of the play illumined both for cast and audience the faith which had created it and the Blessed Virgin who had inspired it.

The task to which E. Martin Browne dedicated his life has opened into wide horizons. Not only have he and Mrs. Browne been privileged to unveil to the twentieth century the beauty of the age of faith, but they have also been a source of inspiration to the poets and playwrights of the present.

BRENDAN BEHAN'S UNARRANGED REALISM

By BERNARD FARRAGHER

In a review for *The London Times* of October 12, 1929, Charles Morgan not only demonstrated his critical astuteness but added stature to his role of prophet. The subject of the review was Sean O'Casey's new play, *The Silver Tassie*. Morgan first described O'Casey's realism:

The unity of the work of art is no longer to depend upon the consistency of its material. Instead, as if the drama were being rolled over and tossed in the air before our eyes like a diamond, we are so to observe its facets of tragedy, comedy, and open farce that their flashing becomes at last one flash and perhaps, by imaginative and symbolic transition, one spiritual light. Unity is to spring from diversity.

He concluded with his prophecy: "It is a method with a future."¹

O'Casey's "future" with this method of unarranged realism has already been chronicled.² My purpose is to suggest how the plumage of the Green Crow (O'Casey's self-styled title) has settled on the borstal boy, Brendan Behan. The parallels between O'Casey's method and Behan's juxtapositions are evident in Behan's first play, *The Quare Fellow*. But it is his most recent effort, *The Hostage*, that indicates that he is a dramatist with a debt to O'Casey.

This debt becomes more evident when the structure of his plays is studied. In *The Quare Fellow*, Behan exploits the O'Casey method, but the ghost of Scribe and the well-made play lies unexorcized in the exposition of this play of prison life. Using a device that is reminiscent of O'Casey's *The Bishop's Bonfire*, Behan does not introduce the quare fellow into his play. What is dramatized is the effect that the fellow—a condemned murderer who is to hang on the following morning—makes upon the prisoners and wardens. Their responses reveal a microcosm similar to the world of O'Casey's tenements. Behan unifies this material—as O'Casey did in *The Shadow of a Gunman*—by means of the unities of time, place, and action. The use of these unities and the structure of Act One are two of the most striking Scribean aspects of the play.

The exposition of *The Quare Fellow* which is mainly presented by a prisoner named Dunlavin rises in intensity throughout the first act. This pattern of increasing suspense, which is shared by the audience and the prisoners, terminates at its highest point of interest and action when the lifer tries to hang himself.

¹ James Agate, *The English Dramatic Critics: An Anthology 1660-1932* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1932), p. 347. O'Casey later used a similar image of a jewel when discussing his plays; Cf. *The Green Crow* (New York: Braziller, 1956), p. 182.

² It will be interesting to note any changes that may occur in his chronicle when O'Casey's unpublished plays are printed.

Bernard P. Farragher is a professor of English at Assumption University, Worcester, Massachusetts. He has edited *Humanistic Poetry* and is a contributing editor to *Abstracts of English Studies*.

Acts Two and Three of this play are written in the counterpoint of O'Casey. Boasting prisoners, homesick wardens, juvenile delinquents, ambitious screws, a pub-crawling hangman with a street-preaching assistant—these are some of the melodies employed by Behan. The result is that he, like O'Casey, has been able to achieve what John Gassner describes as the ultimate purpose of realism: "to give a picture of life which will be at the same time an interpretation of life, to bring meaning out of apparent chaos without permitting the audience to become aware of the controlling presence of the artist."³

The controlling presence of the artist is more evident in Behan's *The Hostage*. Much of the control is exercised through a boy named Pat, the caretaker of a houseful of eccentric characters. Pat is the only two-dimensional character in the play. He is in part a boasting soldier, a modern version of tricky Matthew Merrygreek, a Bohemian, and most importantly the play's narrator and stage manager. For example, he introduces the innocent convent-bred Tercsa to the British soldier who is held hostage in his house. He encourages this symbiotic relationship which ultimately destroys the soldier and ends the play. He makes possible the assignations of these lovers by getting rid of the soldier's guard, and then he calls out, "Now take off the lights and give them a chance."

As stage manager, Pat bridges the many melodies in the play's counterpoint. However, Pat, like the other characters, does not develop; they have a certain amount of verisimilitude, but they do not change within the play. This lack of character development is one of two clues—the other is found in the beginning and end of the play—that suggest Behan's purpose. The play opens and closes on the same note of dancing, singing, and farce (at the end of the play the "dead" soldier pops up and sings the closing song). It is as if Behan has suggested that neither life nor death is meaningful. Nothing changes; everything is the same; and life without meaning, as seen in the microcosm that is Pat's house, goes on. However, this nihilism doesn't mean that the play is depressing. On the contrary, Behan has also learned from O'Casey that naturalism is out of style, and a play should present "facets of tragedy, comedy, and open farce"—especially if it is a play where characters eat, drink, and perhaps die on the morrow.

³ Alan S. Downer, *The British Drama* (New York: Appleton, 1950), p. 326.

DRAMA BOOKSHELF

TWO DRAMAS: PAUL CLAUDEL. Translated by Wallace Fowlie. Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1960; pp. 295. \$4.50

Publication of Wallace Fowlie's translation of "Break of Noon" (*Partage de Midi*) and "The Tidings Brought to Mary" (*L'Annonce faite a Marie*) in *Two Dramas Paul Claudel* (Henry Regnery, 1960) is an important literary event. While Claudel (1868-1955) has been recognized by critics as one of the great writers in modern French literature, his works have been virtually inaccessible in English. Primarily a poet, Claudel's dramatic works evidence that symbolic and mystical character that makes translation so difficult and, perhaps, explains partially why he has not been translated before.

"The Tidings Brought to Mary," it is true, was translated by Louise Morgan Sill and published in 1917 by the Yale University Press. While this edition was quite satisfactory (in some ways more "poetic," with its more literal rendering and a charming archaism, than Fowlie's), it is based on the 1912 *Nouvelle Revue Francaise* version; Fowlie, on the other hand, uses the definitive text, prepared by Claudel in 1948 for the Theatre Hebertot. The latter version pares away a certain ambiguity in key characters that results in both a clearer demonstration of its principal themes and an intensification of its mystical qualities.

This is, amazingly enough, the first English translation of *Partage de Midi*, a major work on the theme of salvation, which Claudel wrote in 1905. Fowlie again bases his translation on a new text which Claudel in 1948 prepared for Jean-Louis Barrault's production at the Theatre Marigny.

He has done an admirable job in presenting a clean, intelligible translation of dramas which are essentially, because of the intense fusion of poetic matter and manner, untranslatable. While no translations will completely satisfy some readers, I doubt if better ones will be forthcoming; and they do offer an opportunity to the English-speaking world to study two powerful Christian plays in the great tradition.

II

"Break of Noon" (*Partage de Midi*) is almost allegorical drama on the nature of love and its role in man's journey to God. On the surface, it analyzes the relationship between three men and a woman. Yse, the woman, is wife, mistress, and God's envoy. Inevitably she calls to mind Nina Leeds (heroine of Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*, 1927), who was at once wife, lover, and mother, insatiable in her thirsts, but ultimately (and sentimentally) a Freudian case-study in frustration.

The difference between these two dramatic subjects is a measure of O'Neill's shallowness and Claudel's depth. Yse, like Nina Leeds, draws all men to her: to De Ciz ("How bitter it is to be over being young"), the husband, while unimaginative and unregenerated, Yse typifies conventional sexual relationships;

to Amalric ("How fine it is not to be dead, but to be alive"), the sensualist, the giver of pleasure, Yse is a partner in physical love that ends in the flesh; but to Mesa ("How dangerous it is to begin to be over being alive!"), Yse is the spy of God, luring him to an unearthly love. Yse in the role of woman-in-love functions, therefore, as psychological and spiritual catalyst, answering the question as to the purpose of love; whereas Nina Leeds exists *sui generis*, the end of the dramatist's study being to unfold the facets of the lover herself; the one is metaphysical, the other merely psychological. Claudel intended his study to be more than a social document; the implications of his action are cosmic, involving the struggle for their souls between the unseen but active Creator and His creatures.

The drama begins to unfold "on [a] moving ship, in the middle of an absurd ocean." Like the experience aboard Herman Melville's ship, the *Fidèle*, in *The Confidence Man*, we are to witness the macrocosm in the microcosmic world.

The dramatic center is not, however, in Yse, but in Mesa, a young man who "has religion as they say"; but a "religion" that has turned him in upon himself and in which he has "left mankind."

Into the narcotic, perhaps neurotic, isolation of his soul, Yse the adventuress intrudes. Mesa asks: "Why did you come to upset me?" Yse answers: "Women are created just for that reason. . . . I represent the impossible." As she later complains, "It's not my fault if all these people cling to me. A wicked woman, they'll say." The defenses of Mesa's insularity are broken down through this affair. If the play had ended here, it would have fallen into the facile genre of "salvation in sin" drama and Yse would have added her name to the roster of the "prostitutes with hearts of gold" who "save" selfish human beings.

Not that Yse is herself by any means a conscious angel of mercy. She is interested in "Me, me, me"; she can blithely propose to Amalric, another lover, that they "use" Mesa, and pleads with Mesa, "God drove you away, but I won't." She is struggling against God, but unwittingly for Him.

Nor will Mesa return to God without a struggle ("It isn't easy to run away from God," he says). From self pity ("At least I am suffering. At least I am very unhappy"), he rises to a consideration of someone outside himself. He says to Yse: "At least with you, a man knows who you are and with whom he is dealing." What torments him now is God, "Another person in you and whom you have to tolerate. . . . It was He who made my eyes. . . . It was He who made my heart and I can't get rid of Him."

His final learned-lesson is that Yse is *not* happiness, but "what is in the place of happiness." Yet he admits, "I needed someone with her face to teach me, and no one else."

Unreconciled, Yse nevertheless grants her role in Mesa's spiritual hegira. She had taught him to belong to someone else and comments: ". . . so wrapped up and tightly closed, I can't imagine how the good Lord would have gone about opening you."

To open himself meant pain, suffering, for it is through suffering that his spiritual regeneration is possible. Yse admits that she was his cross, "a great cross. You wanted only my body, but I had something quite different in mind." And in the end she has lost him to a persistent God; but love has thus been fitted into the ordered scheme for man's salvation.

III

In a sense, "The Tidings Brought to Mary" is not so much a parallel with "Break of Noon" (in his "Foreword," Fowlic proposes such a parallel between the effects of passionate and of mystical love), as a sequel to it. Violaine, the heroine of "Tidings," has, in the Prologue, already accepted the burden of God's love, when, "stronger than Satan," with a kiss she forgives Pierre for his (thwarted) attempt to violate her. With her kiss, she accepts ("She kissed that leper, on his mouth, knowing what she did") the leprosy which he had contracted with his attempted rape and a life of the cross which will result in her eventual saint-hood. (Francois Mauriac's *Le Baiser au Léproux*, 1921, which comes to mind, echoes the theme of "Break of Noon," rather than "Tidings," since renunciation is thrust upon its heroine as it is upon Mesa, rather than welcomed, as it is by Violaine.) "Break of Noon" ends with Mesa's embracing of God's love; "Tidings" begins with Violaine's having already embraced this love and shows its consequences. The theme, therefore, is the power of renunciation.

In taking the leprosy upon herself, Violaine gives up her fiance Jacques Hury to her sister Mara and begins to "suffer with Our Lord." Pierre is the stone upon which Violaine builds the Church of God in her soul. In the course of the drama, Violaine miraculously raises from the dead the child of Mara and Jacques. Her power stems from "suffering and praying" and, although she dies (killed by the jealous Mara), she has understood well the words of her father: "The purpose of life is not to live. . . . It is not a question of living, but of dying. Not a question of building the cross, but hanging from it and giving what we have joyfully."

Surprisingly, it has never, to my knowledge, been pointed out that Claudel's play is closely paralleled by Andre Gide's treatment of the same theme in *La Porte étroite*. The two works when placed side by side dramatically demonstrate the profound grasp of Claudel (and conversely, of course, the warp in Gide's Jansenistic theology).

Gide's heroine Alissa, like Violaine, gives up her lover Jerome to her sister, but dies alone and abandoned with only a futile gesture of sacrifice to show for a life which, Gide implies (contrasting the barrenness of Alissa with the motherhood of Juliette) could have been rich and useful. She has sacrificed the normal happiness of others, as well as her own, to her intransigently dour ideal.

I do not know of a stronger rejection in literature of the concept of renunciation; but Gide's satire fails, I believe, since it levels its subtle barbs at a straw man: Alissa has *not* known a renunciation through love, but rather a spiritually crippling brand of loveless renunciation.

The novel *La Porte étroite* was begun in 1905, the year that Gide met Claudel, and it is difficult to believe that Gide did not become familiar with the early version of Claudel's play, *La Jeune Fille Violaine*, which had been published in 1892.

Claudel had laid siege to the soul of Gide with the intention of converting him to the Catholic faith. Such a step would have demanded a sacrifice which Gide was, apparently, not ready to make. In his *Journal*, July 2, 1907, he had written apropos of Claudel, "understanding in the very marrow of my bones both the *Interest* of the step that Claudel and he [his friend Jammes, who had been brought into the Church] wanted to see me take and also why I did not take it . . . I wrote this little 'topical' work into which I put my whole heart but also my whole reason." Since the theme of the "topical" work was renunciation, it would seem that Gide recognized the pertinence of the subject to his own life and was led to produce an apologia. It is no wonder then, that it differs so profoundly from Claudel's dramatization of the subject.

In the last analysis, I would have to judge Gide's dissection of Alissa as brilliant, effective, and, on its own terms, *accurate*; but certainly her conception of renunciation is not Christian. For this we must turn to Claudel's play, where the glory and the joy of the Christian's cross are just as effectively and just as brilliantly presented.

I have discussed rather at length each of Claudel's plays presented in this volume, since such Christian drama is a rarity these days. Perhaps, in a civilization that has lost touch with Christian traditions, they can attain no great popularity (although Barrault proved with his productions that they wereactable): but they certainly deserve to be more widely known, and we are in debt to Wallace Fowlie for having made them, at last, available.

Brother Luke M. Grande, F.S.C.
Christian Brothers College
Memphis, Tennessee

THE PARADOX OF TRAGEDY. By D. D. Raphael. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1960; pp. 112. \$3.00.

Theories of tragedy are like theories of metaphysics; no matter how often they are finally annihilated by critics, they keep showing up again. Joseph Wood Krutch might well agree with Kant that there is a need in the human person that can only be satisfied by such mental exercises. This latest theory on tragedy by a Scottish philosopher, D.D. Raphael, has a right to a public hearing as the opinions of one man on the subject. By the same token, however, it also is obliged to undergo a public critique.

The major drawback to the book is that Mr. Raphael is theorizing on a subject in which he has limited experience. In the preface to the book he admits

that his acquaintance with drama is sketchy—the Greek tragedies, some Shakespeare, a few classical French plays, and a very few modern dramas. To the philosopher as to the scientist and the critic, a theory will appear as strong as its evidence. The evidence in such a study must be founded on the existing tragedies themselves. Yet by his own admission, the author claims no very convincing command of his subject. The consequences are seen throughout the book.

After the first ten pages of a necessarily superficial critique of the *Poetics*, Mr. Raphael blandly states: "I have delayed too long over Aristotle, longer than his theory of Tragedy deserves. (On this score, one wonders how much time the present theory deserves.) Aristotle, however, is not the only person who is ignored. The professor has slighted a host of modern critics who have made serious studies of tragedy with far superior backgrounds in the field. Many of the problems he poses and many of the solutions he arrives at have already received more thorough treatment. He would not, for example, speak with contempt of Aristotle had he been acquainted with Francis Fergusson's modern study in *The Idea of a Theater*. Again, his discussion of religion in its relation to tragedy has been given more adequate treatment by men like Henn, Lynch, Myers, Michel, Muller, Sewall, and Roberts. His almost complete silence about modern drama makes one wonder whether he has not taken Krutch's indictment in *The Modern Temper* a little too seriously. Any new theory cannot well be formulated without recognizing the work of such playwrights and critics as Brecht, Beckett, Claudel, Eliot, Jaspers, Lorca, Miller, Unamuno, and Williams.

The key to understanding Mr. Raphael's view of tragedy lies in his definition of the tragic conflict and his peculiar statement of the problem of evil. The conflict in tragedy, he says, is always "between inevitable power, which we may call necessity, and the reaction to necessity of self-conscious effort." Man is doomed to be overcome, but the greatness of soul which he displays in the struggle inspires admiration, awe, and an experience of the sublime. Taken as such, one sees a close relation between the author's theory and that expounded by playwright Maxwell Anderson in *The Essence of Tragedy*. Well and good, thus far. When Mr. Raphael defines the problem of evil, which is basic to tragedy, as the problem of justifying the existence of innocent suffering and the justice of God, he seems to imply that in genuine tragedy the existence of the suffering is never so justified. Such a view fits into the total pattern of his theory. Man, according to this scheme, suffers unjustly. Though he is ultimately defeated by the overwhelming power of necessity (some aspect of God in His creation), he gains the triumph of victory and actually grows greater in defeat. The theory has two difficulties: 1) it does not square with most of the evidence (that is, the extant tragedies); 2) it places evil outside man and reduces him to the "innocent victim" status that has ruined so many potentially good plays. In order to be capable of greatness, a tragic hero must be capable of taking responsibility for his evil action.

One further problem in the development of the theory should be noted. It is difficult enough to discuss the theory of tragedy objectively without constantly going to the sources in drama itself. It is almost impossible to get people to agree to what the playwright means—even when the script is in front of them. To attempt an analysis of the aesthetic reaction to the reading or viewing of this type of play reduces the chances for agreement to the vanishing point.

And yet this is one of the approaches the author proposes: "Let me now proceed to characterize the aesthetic satisfaction of Tragedy." If, despite the difficulty in such an attempt, one wishes to use this method of analysis, he should remember one thing. A procedure of this kind must be based not only on a full acquaintance with more than a handful of plays but must, for any validity at all, be based on more than a mere *reading* of the scripts. To consider the aesthetic satisfaction of drama, one must have experienced the art form in its totality. One of the frequent deficiencies of the theorist is that he forgets that drama is not another story like the novel. As Francis Fergusson pointed out a decade ago, the drama is not "primarily a composition in the verbal medium; the words result, as one might put it, from the underlying structure of incident and character." The same author also reminded his readers that Aristotle defined tragedy as the "imitation of an action" and not the narration of a story. Drama shows the audience a story in the actions of the play. Plays may be read and analyzed, but the experience is incomplete if it stops there. Mr. Raphael as a philosopher has powers of analysis that he uses to advantage in developing his theory, yet one feels that there is something lacking in the vitality of the argument—a perception and feeling for the artistic medium that cannot be developed except through long exposure to the form in its dynamic state.

Mr. Raphael's conclusion pretty well leaves the reader in the seventeenth century. Racine is the latest major figure to whom he refers with any authority. Tragedy, however, is as much a contemporary problem as it has always been. It is incumbent on every age to struggle with the problem afresh—playwrights to create, critics to analyze the new approaches in the light of previous achievements. It is not enough to know the monuments of the past; nor is it enough to deny that tragedy can exist in our own civilization. Tragedy as Aeschylus or Shakespeare or Racine created it (and all three were different creations) is as much a historical fact as the discovery of America. But one cannot turn back time to an age long past. One should not even want to. The twentieth century occupies its unique place in history. It is the duty of the contemporary critic to understand and appreciate the past but also to evaluate, examine, explicate the tragedy of his own generation. What has been going on since 1880 is not "second rate Shakespeare" but "first rate something else." One can only view with suspicion a theory that simply ignores the modern drama and prefers the comfortable ruts cut centuries ago by playwrights and critics of other civilizations and eras.

MR. EMILE G. McANANY, S.J.
St. Louis University, St. Louis, Mo.



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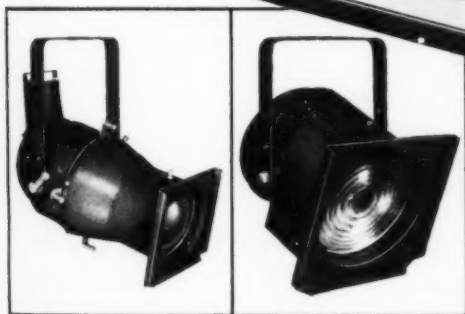
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